Monday.

Postscript.

For God's sake, say nothing to anybody about Harold Nicolson & the Foreign Office. I find this a dead secret. Don't, above all, breathe a whisper to Clive — whom I've just seen.

VW.

52 Tavistock Sqre.
W.C.1.

Sunday
15th May
1927.

Dearest,

No letter from you. But I see how it is —

Scene: after dinner: Nessa sewing: Duncan doing absolutely nothing.

__Nessa__. (throwing down her work) Christ! There's the Lighthouse! I've only got to page 86 & I see there are 320. Now I cant write to Virginia because she'll expect me to tell her what I think of it.

__Duncan__. Well, I should just tell her that you think it a masterpiece.

__Nessa__ But she's sure to find out. They always do. She'll want to know why I think it a masterpiece

__Duncan__ Well Nessa, I'm afraid I cant help you, because I've only read 5 pages so far, & really I dont see much prospect of doing much reading this month, or next

month, or indeed before Christmas.

<u>Irena</u> Oh its all very well for you. But I shall have to say something: And I dont know who in the name of Jupiter all these people are (Turns over some pages desperately) I think I shall make a timetable: its the only way: ten pages a day for 20 days is —

<u>Doreen</u> . But you'll never be able to keep up ten pages a day.

<u>Irena</u> (rather dashed) No. I suppose I shant. Well then, we may as well be hung for a sheep as for a goat — though whats the sense of saying that I never could see: a sheep is almost identical with a goat in some countries; except that one can milk a goat of course. Lord! I shall never forget Violet Dickinson at Athens & the goats milk! But what was I saying when you interrupted me? oh yes: I shall take the bull by the horns. I shall write to Virginia & say "I think its a masterpiece —"

NYPL

2

(She takes the inkpot & prepares to write, but finds it full of dead & dying insects).

"Oh Duncan, what have you done with the inkpot? Used it to catch flies in? But that's a beetle! Yes m'm. Beetles have 12 legs: flies only 8. D'you mean to say you didn't know that? Well, I suppose you're one of those people who thinks a spider's an insect: Now if you'd been brought up in Cornwall you'd know that a spider's not an insect; it's— no I don't think it's a reptile: it's something queer. I know. Anyhow, I can't write to Virginia, because the ink is nothing but a mass of beetles or spiders legs I really don't know what they are: but one man's meat is another man's poison; & if you will use the ink pot to catch flies in, then I don't see how even Virginia could possibly expect, or even wish me to write to her— (they settle down again to discuss spiders &c) &c &c

Stop. Isn't this word for word the truth?

Well: I must have a little room for mere salutations. Clive has been here: in my opinion utterly distraught. I think, somewhat, he's verging on collapse of some sort. He said his stay at Cassis had been a

failure, so far as his book is concerned. He gave me the impression
of having lost all his illusions, like a bat in the day
time. Yet he sees Mary. Only he calls her Mary
Hutchinson rather stiffly. She rambles, just as he did before
he went away: half apologised for laughing at my letters (you
must have told him) & then said he couldn't sleep at all –
~~I think he's so [illegible] crushed~~, & Nina had come in drunk, &
he had been put in her place by Robin Mayor: he was off to
Sceaux, but I've never seen him so disjointed, & twitchy &
queer. We dined with the Keynes': he almost brought the
tears to my eyes (though he gave us not a drop to drink) – he's converted I scarcely know how;
by his doglike affection for you; but I'm convinced he feels at his heart your malicious ways, &
yet cant ~~[illegible]~~ overcome his superstition that you & Duncan
are the soul & salt of the world. Vanessa says they – Vanessa
used to do that – All his talk was of you: but in the past.
Lydia ripens visibly. She has her little stories & jokes: but is
settling into housekeeping, & talks, religiously, of the fresh
fish she gets at Selfridges, & how, by making eyes at a
certain shopman, he pulls the kidneys fresh & bleeding
from the sheep (or is it cow?) in her presence. I see in
this all the tragedy of the children, which, no doubt, will
corrode her ~~at~~ entirely. She's off to catch butterflies with
old Dr. Keynes in the Tyrol. Thank God, I'm not.
Otherwise, I'm ~~sof~~ engulfed in writing a

paper on poetry to read to some Oxford undergraduates on Wednesday. Vita comes with me. We stay at an hotel. Let us hope for nightingales, moons, & love. At present its damnably cold, & I cant get over my impression that London is built on a graveyard. Its flat; its grey; its drab. Its walked, too, by the Alixes & the Bunnys: who all seem to me phantom & futile. Poor Mervyn Arnold-Forster — yes, he's dead; almost the most disappointed pinched starved man I've ever known; & we're in a fix what to do now.

Adrian & Karin have patched, she tells me, a working marriage; which means she will visit American asylums 6 months of the year; & the other 6 live here. But her sterling qualities are now uppermost, & I was deeply touched — I dont quite know by what. It came over me sitting with her, dumb & deaf & resolute, in front of the open window, watching Alix & Waley march round & round the square together. These things do come over me. Its what makes me so

4

undependable as a friend. Tomorrow I am lunching at Simpsons ~~to~~ with Sayon to meet some Swedes — "not exciting people exactly" he said; so I expect an uproarious time. We are, by the way, taking a first class carriage to see the Eclipse in June. Will you share? It stops in Yorkshire as the sun disappears for 5 seconds; we all get out —

NYPL

look up; hot coffee is then served & we return to London. Sayon is coming; also the Swedes.

When are you coming back?

Damn Duncan's show: it was shut; they cant afford, Maynard says, even a Cretin to sit there with his knitting; so one finds it shut.

Yrs B.

Monks House
Rodmell.

Sunday. 22nd May 1927

Dearest,

I was so pleased & excited by your letter that I trotted about all day like a puppy with a bone. In fact you entirely destroyed my powers of work: I was always taking it out & reading it again, until I thought perhaps I exaggerated, & ran off to Leonard with it to ask him if he thought you really meant it. Taking in to account your well known character, he decided, finally, that you probably did. So then I settled down to complete satisfaction, which none else's letters have given me. (Here's one that may recall the character of Dora Sanger to you — I dont want it back)

But what do you think I did know about mother? It cant have been much. What would Quentin have known of you if you had died when he was 13? I suppose one broods over some germ; but I specially refrained either from reading her letters, or father's life. It was easier to do, but I was very much afraid you would think me sentimental. I seem to make people think that the Stephen family was one of insane gloom. I thought it was a cheerful enough book. I dont defend my accuracy, though I

If you could bring me back a few penny cigars such as one buys in Cassis I should be eternally grateful & what is more, pay you: I got the habit of cigar smoking in Italy & cant break myself of it.

Monks House
Rodmell.

Sunday. 22nd May
1927

Dearest,

I was so pleased & excited by your letter that I trotted
about all day like a puppy with a bone. In fact
you entirely destroyed my powers of work: I was always
taking it out & reading it again, until I thought perhaps I
exaggerated, & ran off to Leonard with it to ask him if
he thought you really meant it. Taking in to account
your well known character, he decided, finally, that you
probably did. So then I settled down to complete
satisfaction; which no one elses letters have given me. (Here's
one that may recall the character of Dora Sanger to you —
I dont want it back)

But what do you think I did know about mother?
It cant have been much — What would Quentin have
known of you if you had died when he was 13?
I suppose one broods over some germ; but I specially
refrained either from reading her letters, or fathers life.
He was easier to do, but I was very much afraid
you would think me sentimental. I seem to
make people think that the Stephen family was
one of insane gloom. I thought it was a cheerful enough
book. I dont defend my accuracy, though I

If you could bring me back a few penny cigars such as one buys in
Cassis I should be eternally grateful &, what is more, pay you: I got the habit of
cigar smoking in Italy & cant break myself of it.

think Watts used to buy lapis lazuli, break it up with a small hammer, & keep it under damp clothes. I think, too, the pre-Raphaelites thought it more like nature to use garden clay, whenever possible, to serve for colours. Lord Olivier writes that my horticulture & natural history is in every instance wrong: there are no rooks, elms, or dahlias in the Hebrides: my sparrows are wrong; so are my carnations: & it is impossible for women to die of childbirth in the 3rd month. He infers that Prue had had a slip (which is common in the Hebrides) & was 9 months gone. This is the sort of thing that painters know nothing of.

omit [If we weren't down here for Sunday, I should be telling Clive; & so might throw light upon the mystery. The position seems odd: he has Mary there; seems in good spirits with her; & then goes about (this is from Eddy) saying that he is wretched; twitching; complaining; maundering on about life being over, & his bolt being shot, as he did before he went away. I think the truth must be that he's back again where he was, with Mary: she exacerbating & exasperating him; & he now without any prospect of escape. I'm lunching with him on Monday, but shan't see him alone. I think he wants, not exactly to confide, but to talk round &

NYPL

about himself.   You'll be back though. Now, Dolphin; you've got to face it & do it. People feel very strongly about you & Duncan— What's life without those prime jewels of our coronet, people say — the most unlikely people are moved to a bastard kind of poetry on this occasion: people who have never spoken save plain prose before: people like Arthur Waley, Ray Strachey, & Lisa Stillman. A voice on the telephone plunged me into the wildest memories— of St Ives — Gerald — the trapeze on the landing — Yesterday. "I am trying to find Cameron photographs of Mama— Can you lend me any negatives? ... I should so much like to see you & Nessa again... Oh in France is she? Vanessa always in France! I shall try again in a few weeks time!" Then the whole apparition, which was of the utmost vividness, vanished. But as I was saying, you must face life again. What's the use of slavering in a nettle bed t'other side of Europe? Ottoline unhinges; but she never falters. She's still at Garsington; Philip sits in the Nation chucking Mr Jones on the chin, & Leonard comes in to find "P.M" marked on all the best books. "Uncle Philip would like these, please, Mr. Woolf" says Mr. Jones archly. Leonard says nothing. He says, going out, casually, "Mr. Morrell may do a briefer notice of the Aztecs or the like: but if he writes more than 50 words, I shall cut it."   With the Morrells in London,

their snuggling & chucking, ~~xx~~ to put it euphemistically, may increase; & not wanting a whole clutch of bastards, Ottoline may stay away.]

Then I went to Oxford to speak to the youth of both sexes on poetry & fiction. They are young; they are callow; they know nothing about either. They sit on the floor & ask insolent questions about Joyce. They are years behind the Cambridge young, it seemed to me; Quentin or Julian could knock them into mud pies. But they have their charm— There was a man called Martin (I think) an adorer & disciple of Rogers, who was the most intelligent. We went on to somebodies rooms, & there they sat on the floor, & said what a master they thought Roger Fry; & were Bell & Grant able to make a living by decorations; & was Tom Eliot happy with his wife. They're oddly under our thumbs, at the moment— at least this particular group. Roger, the old wizard, has them all entranced— I pretended to a degree of intimacy which, alas, is not mine, to colour my cheeks for them. Clive, they said, was very good fun; but we always feel Roger Fry the real mind. [Then there was Vita, very striking; like a willow tree; so dashing, on her long white legs with a crimson bow: but rather awkward, forced indeed to take her stockings down & rub her legs with ointment at dinner, owing to midges— I like this in the aristocracy. I like the legs; I like the bites; I like the complete arrogance & unreality of their minds— for instance buying silk dressing gowns @ casually for £5 &

NYPL

& then lunching off curd cream (a yellow mess) which she picked out of tartlets with a fork, dropping the pastry ~~into~~ back into the dish; & then tipping porters a shilling for doing nothing; & then — the whole thing (I cant go into details) is very splendid & voluptuous & absurd. Also she has a heart of gold, & a mind which, if slow, works doggedly; ~~and~~ & has its moments of lucidity. But enough — You will never succumb to the charms of any of your sex — What an arid garden the world must be for you! What avenues of stone pavements & iron railings! Greatly though I respect the male mind, & adore Duncan (but, thank God, he's hermaphrodite, ~~he~~ androgynous, like all great artists) I cannot see that they have a glow-worm's worth of charm about them. The scenery of the world takes no lustre from their presence. They add of course immensely to its dignity & safety: but when it comes to a little excitement —! (I see that you will attribute all this to your own charms, in which I daresay you're not far wrong.)

How many paintings shall I have? Monks House is in ~~sa~~ sore need of some. I think you'll have to come here for a week end — well, I daresay you could get off with one night — before July. There are several problems waiting you: I have my own ideas, & my own

taste, but it's all ineradicably bad. The garden is this year a miracle of order. But that damned Allinson, in concert with Durrant, has changed a farmbuilding into a florid surrey villa in 6 weeks. Marjorie's book twits us all, practically by name; & compares us with Jos & herself, much to our disadvantage. It has rather more merit than the others, but that is chiefly that she has taken over some modern tricks, & the interest of finding the Barley Mow, Fitzroy Street, & the Beanstalk in print keeps one going]

Both Dick & John Strachey have been drowned — according to Lottie. That is to say they stole the Stephen's boat which had a hole in it, & sailed away & have never been heard of since. Lottie says they were washed out to sea. Nellie says they have gone to visit John's, or Dick's, wife at Harwich. Adrian says nobody's heard anything for ten days but he doesn't see any particular reason for anxiety. I creep up & peer into the Stephen's dining room where any afternoon, in full daylight, is to be seen a woman in the last agony of despair; lying on a sofa, burying her face in the pillow, while Adrian broods over her like a vulture, analysing her soul. It is exactly like a picture by John Collier.

This is a very very long letter. I would have you observe.

yr B.

NYPL

HAMILL 6/1/66

PAGE(S) EXCLUDED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS: LETTERS WRITTEN TO VIRGINIA WOOLF.

52 Tavistock Sqre

25th May 1927

Dearest,

I am horrified to find that my letter will probably have missed you at Cassis. Not that it was anything particular in the way of a letter; but I was so much touched, & excited & overcome by yours (I can never believe that you approve of me in any way, strange though it may seem) that I particularly wanted you to get it. I tried to express my thanks. But it was such a rush here, what with going to Oxford & so on, that I put off writing till I got to Rodmell, & then found we had no stamps, & so brought the letter back to London, & now I see that you are leaving Cassis today. I'm afraid I shall have missed you. However, no letter pleased me one tenth as much as yours did. I was, truthfully, unable to write at all that day. Finally, incredulity that you could like The Lighthouse led me to consult Leonard, & when he said he thought you meant what you said, I was in such a happy state, no tea kettle, no cat, not all the contented & happy creatures in the whole world, were a match for me. I'm in a terrible state of pleasure that you should think Mrs Ramsay so like mother. At the same time, its a psychological mystery why she should be: how a child could know about her; except that she has always haunted me, partly, I suppose, her beauty; & then dying at that moment, I suppose she cut a great figure on ones mind when it was just awake, & had not

any experience of life. Only then one would have suspected that one had made up a sham—an ideal. Probably there is a great deal of you in Mrs Ramsay; though, in fact, I think you & mother are very different in my mind. Why do I attach so much importance to what you & Duncan think? Illiterate, simpletons, as you are? I daresay you are qualified however, much more than any of my literary friends to judge of things as a whole, as works of art. Anyhow, next to your letter, Duncan's gave me most pleasure; & I'm going to write to him. But then you say that you cant judge of it as a work of art yet. Please think it over & tell me if anything emerges. Duncan's hit upon the thing I thought best—the dinner party. But you will have had enough of this Egotism, poor Dolphin. The talk about it here is practically over. One very seldom gets through it, & if it would only sell well, & I could buy a motor car, I should now be content (you'll be glad to hear) to dismiss it from my mind. In fact, it is rather a distraction from the thing one wants to write now.

Secret [I saw Lytton yesterday & asked him about Clive. He was, of course, highly discreet, & would only say that he could see no reason why things should not now settle down again. He said that he thought Clive would find that the habit, after 13 years, of seeing Mary, was too strong to be broken. I lunched with Clive, & he seemed again in the highest spirits, & gave me obscurely to understand that all is at the moment all right between them. He was beset by ladies. Bea was coming to tea: Bertha to dinner, but he called her "a little bitch" & said he must find some way of not going to bed with her. Then he gave us (Dadie & me—Lady Violet Bonham Carter had to go—rather a dull lunch, on the whole) a great discourse upon the pains of love, which, he said, were amply made

up for by its delights, which, he said, I had never known, & never could know. So I denied it, & then Dadie said that Clive was undoubtedly a Great Lover, & Clive was highly pleased, & seemed to think that he had been very gallant & adventurous & romantic during the last few months, & deserved a medal: so that's all as it should be. He dresses in sky blue flannel, with blue tie & pocket handkerchief, & says he has lost a stone & a half.

Yesterday was such an awful day of incessant conversation that my head is still bemused. Clive's lunch party: then Faith, Logan, Eddy & Vita to tea: then Lytton in the Square: then dinner at 37 with Douglas & Dadie & Cynthia Noble — a dull girl: then they went to Kitchin's party, but I had the strength to refuse: I am going to entreat your help in leading a nice quiet life, with little excursions to Reading & Hampton Court. This gabble is senseless. Lytton however was affable & urbane — charming, though apparently he has gone through tortures at the hands of Senhouse. The whole affair is over. He has been in the depths of despair, & is now trying to get on with his book. Dadie & Clive take it very seriously; & say that a week ago he was desperate, & that nothing has hurt him so much for years. Roger refused to bed in the end — I think that was it. But there'll be another for certain — I don't see how one can take it as a death blow considering how he revives.

Nobody seems to know when you will be back. We hope for the best, as they say: & if anything could touch your hearts of glass & emerald — for I don't deny they are beautiful hearts in their way — it would be the chatter we all keep up about

Nessa & Duncan, whether they're coming & when they're coming – what we can do to make them stay with us, & not go for ever to live among the frogs of Cassis.

No, I thinked Helen. She rather smears my mind – she has a trailing foot. We talk too much about peoples characters – I'm afraid her milieu is rather underworld. But this is only a murmur – not a groan. I like people to have a little bone in their heads – something one can argue about. Not politics, but art or something. Faith afflicts me rather in the same way. One cant talk about Saxon & Barbara for ever.

Now with Dolphin I can always put up a hare or two, ~~&~~ but this is drivelling, & I ought to be writing an article on Morgan's novels, which I cannot finish.

But dearest Dolphin, you were a good kind creature to write me such a nice letter.

yr B

NYPL

Duriés 94 – '28

HAMILL 6/1/66

Nessa & Duncan, whether they're coming & when they're coming — what we can do to make them stay with us, & not go for ever to live among the frogs of Cassis.

No, I shirked Helen. She rather smears my mind — she has a trailing foot. We talk too much about people's characters — I'm afraid her milieu is rather underworld. But this is only a murmur — not a groan. I like people to have a little bone in their heads — something one can argue about. Not politics, but art or something. Facts afflicts me rather in the same way. One cant talk about Saxon & Barbara for ever.

Now with Dolphin I can always put up a hare or two, but this is drivelling, & I ought to be writing an article on Morgan's novels, which I cannot finish.

But dearest Dolphin, you were a good kind creature to write me such a nice letter

V B.

Davies

DS.
94-

HAMILL 6/1/64

Spring 1927

96

We hope you & Duncan will dine with us — both or singly — whatever night you come back. Thursday next week is our only engagement. Would you let me know if possible.

V.W.

Thursday.

We've had an offer for Hyde Pk Gate — they will take it on at £300 or buy for £4,500. What do you think?